

"Mycroft, the chain is complete. But here he comes, if I am not mistaken, to speak for himself."

A moment later the tall and portly form of Mycroft Holmes was ushered into the room.

At his heels came our old friend—Lestrade of Scotland Yard—thin and austere.

"A most annoying business, Sherlock," said he. "Have you read up the case?"

"We have just done so. What were the technical papers?"

"Ah, there's the point! Fortunately it has not come out. The press would be furious if it did. The papers which this wretched youth had in his pocket were the plans of the Bruce-Partington submarine."

"Its importance can hardly be exaggerated. It has been the most jealously guarded of all government secrets. The plans, which are exceedingly intricate, comprising some thirty separate patents, each essential to the working of the whole, are kept in an elaborate safe in a confidential office adjoining the arsenal, with burglar-proof doors and windows."

"But you have recovered them?"

"No, Sherlock, no! That's the pinch. We have not. Ten papers were taken from Woolwich. There were seven in the pockets of Cadogan West. The three most essential are gone—stolen, vanished. You must drop everything, Sherlock."

"The problem certainly presents some points of interest, and I shall be very pleased to look into it. Some more facts, please."

"I have jotted down the more essential ones upon this sheet of paper, together with a few addresses, which you will find of service. The actual official guardian of the papers is the famous government expert, Sir James Walter, whose decorations and subtitles fill two lines of a book of reference. He has grown gray in the service, he is a gentleman, a favored guest in the most exalted houses, and, above all, a man whose patriotism is

above proof. He is one of two who have a key of the safe."

"Who was the other man with a key?"

"The senior clerk and draftsman, Mr. Sidney Johnson. According to his own account, corroborated only by the word of his wife, he was at home the whole of Monday evening after office hours, and his key has never left the watch-chain upon which it hangs."

"Who locked the plans up that night?"

"Mr. Sidney Johnson, the senior clerk."

An hour later Holmes, Lestrade and I stood on the Underground Railroad at the point where it emerges from the tunnel immediately before Aldgate Station. A courteous, red-faced old gentleman represented the railway company.

"This is where the young man's body lay," said he, indicating a spot about three feet from the metals. "It could not have fallen from above, for these, as you see, are all blank walls. Therefore it could only have come from a train, and that train, so far as we can trace it, must have passed about midnight on Monday."

"Watson, we have done all we can here. We need not trouble you any further, Mr. Lestrade. I think our investigation must now carry us to Woolwich."

At London Bridge Holmes wrote a telegram to his brother, which he handed to me before dispatching. It ran thus:

"See some light in the darkness, but it may possibly flicker out. Meanwhile please send by messenger to await return at Baker street a complete list of all foreign spies or international agents known to be in England, with full address. Sherlock."

"That should be helpful, Watson," he remarked, as we took our seats in the Woolwich train. The end is dark to me, but I have hold of one idea which may lead us far. The man met his death elsewhere, and his body